# Transcript: C851 Linux Career Discussion with John Galliano with Guest Mark Cronin

*The following transcript is a verbatim account of the video or audio file accompanying this transcript.*

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

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Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

Hello. My name is Dr. John Galliano, and this is a podcast installment in the Western Governors University IT Audio Series on pursuing a career in Linux. I'm joined today by Mr. Mark Cronin, a network architect at MGM Resorts. Mark focuses there on Cisco, Juniper, Citrix, and Infinera operating systems. Mark is also a current WGU student in the Bachelor of Science Cloud Computing program. Mark, welcome. Thank you for joining me on this podcast.

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

Thanks, John. Thanks for giving me an opportunity to speak on your podcast.

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

Awesome. Let's get started then. I'll start by stating that according to a recent open-source jobs report, 97 percent of hiring IT managers are looking to add Linux talent this year. The report also noted that there are more than 50,000 open jobs on dice.com requiring Linux experience, and individuals with Linux experience are being recruited at an unprecedented rate. These anecdotes tell us that, if someone is interested in pursuing a career in Linux, there are ample opportunities available. Mark, the reason I invited you to join me on this podcast was that as someone already working in the industry, I'd really enjoy getting your perspective on a career in Linux. Does that sound good to you?

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

Yes, please.

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

Let's begin then. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your career trajectory? What attracted you to Linux?

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

In my 20s, I was in the British Royal Navy. I did an apprenticeship there studying electrical and electronic engineering. There was no real IT systems on board. It was all bespoke systems. I eventually ended up supporting sonar equipment on nuclear submarines. I did nine years. Towards the end of it, I started to think about what I'm going to be doing outside of the Navy, and I got interested in IT. Predominantly, I started to do the Microsoft MCSE track, which was at the time, NT4, which I thought was a good introduction to distributed computing systems. I also started to do a CCNA at the time. This is before I go into civilian strip. That interested me as well. I did those exams until I applied for a job at a bank in London and got in at a starting position. It was an operations job. The predominant part of it was overnight operations. At the end of the day, the bank closes the trade floor. Then there's accountancy jobs running. At the time, they were doing all of these on Sun Solaris systems. Sun Solaris is a Unix platform most banks at the time used, and they introduced me to that operating system. They provided us some training courses in Solaris, and I've got some basic skills in that area. I then went on to pursue more on the networking track. Cisco Server Load Balancing and all of that stuff for the next 10 years, but what I noticed as well as Cloud computing coming in to IT industry. Whereas, if you haven't got any skills in Cloud, you're going to be left behind. One of the other things is Linux as well. What I've noticed with Cisco, Juniper, all of the networking manufacturers, rather than having their own monolithic operating system on the hardware, they now ride on top of Linux. Cisco, Juniper, all are using this now. If you get into a situation you have to do some troubleshooting, quite often you have to exit out of the Cisco code that you're running into the operating system. There you are. You're in often a Red Hat or CentOS operating system, if you need to get the technical support, engineers on, and you find you're using Linux skills. That's what I'm finding now. It's just a base skill now I think. Whereas, prior to going back 20 years, they were asking, have you got basic Windows skills to be an engineer? Nowadays, it's almost a prerequisite to have some understanding of Linux.

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

That's a really good point, Mark. I almost look at it as table stakes at this stage in the game. It's interesting that we have some similarities in our background. I have a military background in the United States Air Force myself. Although I was a meteorologist, I soon found myself after a couple of years of operational forecasting as a Solaris Unix administrator for weather systems. Very interesting. Walk us through a typical day in your current job role there at MGM. What are some of the Linux-related tasks that you might carry out?

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

Well, so network architecture. Basic job is to get requirements from our enterprise architect or straight from the business, come up with a solution. We've got to set number of standards and pull out a design, get it peer-reviewed. Then go purchase the equipment. When equipment arrives, then it's about setting up. Often, put it into a lab, getting high-level, low-level design documents in place, putting installation documentations. This is where, as I said earlier, about that Linux scenario. For example, this week, I was implementing Cisco's Firewall Management System, the FMC. This is a management server that runs on Linux. That part of the documentation is the method or procedure. To get this up and running is to run through some basic Linux commands to get it up on the network. That's basically where I am on the Linux. Not too much, but it does come in handy.

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

Fantastic. Then what would you say might be a lesson learned that you would want to share with our students just getting started in current Linux?

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

I think things have gotten a lot easier, but if you go back 20 years ago, it was difficult. Linux wasn't mainstream and was dealing with Sun Solaris. You were often messing around with a Windows version of Sun Solaris, which could be a bit of a pain to get installed. But these days, it's very easy to get hold of a distribution, Ubuntu or CentOS. Even run it on an old laptop that you've got, or just create a VM on your current laptop using VMware Workstation. It gets a Linux operating system up and running. That will probably be your first stop. One way to force the issue, of course, is to try and use Linux full time as a desktop or a primary operating system on your laptop.

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

I like that idea. That's a really good one. Use it as your daily driver. Somebody who was very successful in RC, if you want Linux foundations course and earn the LPI Linux essential certification, what would you say is the key to success in pursuing those two things?

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

Well, I was looking through some of the books that I purchased to do the course. There's the LPI Linux Essentials Study Guide by Christine Bresnahan or Richard Blum. That's one of the books I read. That's goes a little bit in-depth, and there's a abridged version of it, Linux Essentials by Jason Dion. Those are the two new books I bought for this course. Then I'm looking through some books that I had on my shelf. There is the Learn Linux Quickly by Ahmed Alkabary. Then a slightly older one, Linux Command Line and Shell Scripting by Richard Blum as well. They're the four books I've got. I've also got a subscription to A Cloud Guru. There's a course on there, the LPI Linux Essentials. This is call it passive learning. If you want, you can sit there and watch this. I think it's about 20 hours of course, but you can speed it up with the 2.5 times speed, if you need to, and it's easy to go through. As well as the courseware that obviously comes with the WGU course. With all of those, they're overlapping and attacking your brain from different angles. At least, you get into a good position and feel confident. I also heard you did some podcasts. What do call them, John?

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

The cohort videos.

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

The cohorts. I attended a couple of those. Very interesting. Then I had that half-hour meeting with you, where I thought I was 80 percent ready for the course. Then after speaking to you, I think I'm now 50 percent. You showed me how complicated the exam could be and some of the fundamental mistakes. It allowed me to just go back and reassess where I was and go over stuff. That was basically it. Also, obviously have a VM of Linux, usually Ubuntu. All of that, I took about 3-4 weeks to do the course, and ended successfully.

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

That sounds good. I've saved the hardest question for last for you, Mark. What's your favorite Linux distribution, and why?

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

I like Ubuntu. It's just very easy to upgrade. Package management of Ubuntu just seems very easy. Maybe I had a lot of bad experiences in the past when I first started on Linux. Then all the problems, you want this package. Then it doesn't tell you you need a dozen more other packages to install it. Whereas, with Ubuntu, I think it's very easy. Maybe the others have caught up, but that's where I go to. Ubuntu or Red Hat because that's what we use in production.

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

You raised two really excellent points there. It's hard to go wrong with Ubuntu because it is so mainstreamed in 2022. Friendly to use, plug and play. Lots of support available on the Internet for it. Of course, if you use Linux at all in the work center environment, chances are really good that it's going to be Red Hat. The best of both worlds there is. Well, Mark, I want to thank you again for joining me on this WGU IT Audio Series podcast. I think you've provided our students some extremely insightful advice this evening. I know that our students do value real-world experience, especially our career changers. Any last thoughts or comments before we sign off?

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

Just wishing all your students best of luck, work hard on it. This is definitely one of the courses that you will use when you get out there into the Cloud IT environment.

Speaker #2 (John Galliano):

Great. Again, thank you, Mark. You take care.

Speaker #3 (Mark Cronin):

Thank you. Thanks.

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

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